

**Just Wars, Holy Wars and Jihads: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Encounters and Exchanges**, edited by Sohail H. Hashmi, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, xvi + 434 pp., \$31.50/£22.25 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-19-975503-5

“Lining up for a battle in the path of God is worthier than 60 years of worship” is one of the 40 Prophetic traditions compiled and narrated by the Damascene historian, theologian, and jurist Ibn ‘Asākir<sup>1</sup> (d. 1174). He endeavours to develop an intensified and antagonistic form of Sunni jihad doctrine, which would respond to the external Christian crusaders and internal Shī‘i threats that were ubiquitous and acute within his socio-political milieu. *Just Wars, Holy Wars and Jihads: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Encounters and Exchanges* is an impressive and erudite volume that attempts to elaborate on the intricate history of how and why such doctrines and other jihad traditions (from antagonistic and overtly offensive to only passive and defensive in nature), developed through the various stages of Islamic intellectual history. It also attempts to demonstrate, in numerous ways, how these doctrines, traditions, and “jihad thinking” were influenced by the Judaeo-Christian just war and holy war traditions and, consequently were not exclusively Islamic in nature, origin, or proclivity.

This book presents a broad historical overview from Antiquity (seventh century) to modernity, and consists of 20 chapters by a number of academics, including authorities on the traditions and literatures of just war, holy war, and jihad, such as James Turner Johnson, John Kelsay and the editor, Sohail H. Hashmi. The chapters are roughly divided between five main historical sections: “The Early Islamic Conquests;” “The Crusades;” “Gunpowder Empires, Christian and Muslim;” “European Imperialism;” and “International Law and Outlaws,” which all offer constructive and nuanced insights. The fifth, which tentatively investigates the multifarious interaction and correlation of international law with the war and peace traditions in Judaism and Islam, is probably the most fascinating. These discussions not only illustrate that the debate is internal to the Jewish and Muslim traditions but also, significantly, show how these religious traditions may influence conflict or reconciliation vis-à-vis international law and non-religious just war theories.

Several crucial notions are lucidly and meticulously elaborated throughout the book, including the *dār al-Islām* (abode of Islam) and the *dār al-ḥarb* (abode of war) dichotomy, and the fine points of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim formulations of the *jus ad bellum* (causes of war) and the *jus in bello* (conduct of war) are also explored via a diachronic and synchronic analysis. The scriptural traditions are explicated and a nuanced description of the common

history of ideas that have permeated the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim traditions is also given, alongside an examination of the intellectual contribution of numerous eminent theologians and thinkers who facilitated the development of such ideas and the subsequent traditions, such as Augustine of Hippo (d. 430), Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), and Maimonides (d. 1204).

Although the chapters are diverse in nature and scope, they collectively demonstrate the fallacy of regarding the jihad tradition as monolithic and ahistorical; rather, the tradition was ‘exceedingly elastic, polyvalent and polysemous’ and arose from historical circumstances as well as from the contemporary intellectual, ethico-legal, and socio-political milieus. In addition, this book endeavours to deconstruct the traditions of just war, holy war, and jihad via two approaches to assessing the possible encounters and exchanges that may have occurred between the religious traditions. The first explores what Christians, Jews, and Muslims comprehend about each other’s traditions of war and peace, while the second, building upon the first, endeavours to explore the extent to which this may have influenced their various conceptions of just war, holy war, and jihad. James Turner Johnson, in his insightful and reflective conclusion, concisely evaluates the success and failure of this comparative approach:

Some chapters above focus squarely within one or another of three cultural frames ... developing their subjects within those frames in detail but not attempting to work cross-culturally. While not themselves comparative in nature, they provide a useful contribution to the project as a whole ... serious comparative work requires a significant depth of understanding of both subjects being compared ... so those seeking comparative understandings must depend on one another to provide understanding of the cultures in which some are trained and others are not, so that all can hope to recognize parallels, connections, distinctions, and differences and come to identify possible lines of relationship or influence. (405)

Scholarly comparative studies on just war, holy war, and jihad thinking and tradition are still in the nascent phase, but *Just Wars, Holy Wars and Jihads* presents a methodical and nuanced correction to several popular misconceptions and gross inaccuracies that falsely assert the irreconcilability and antagonism between the just war and jihad traditions – misconceptions that are both acutely harmful and widespread amongst laypeople and scholars alike. This complex work is a major contribution to the discipline of just war, holy war, and jihad studies and should be consulted by both academics and, hopefully, policy makers.

## Note

1. Ibn ‘Asākir is the focus of the fifth chapter by Suleiman A. Mourad and James E. Lindsay. It is one of several excellent synchronic examples of the overall argument offered by this volume.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2013.833747>